COMPUTERS

Zip 750 packs more in small size

By KEVIN SAVETZ
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Iomega Corp.'s Zip 750 offers three times the storage capacity of the previous version.

But at less than 1 inch high and 4 inches long, it has not gained much size or weight in the bargain.

Accessing all that capacity – 717 megabytes, according to Microsoft Corp.'s Windows operating system – would take too long over regular USB cables. So, the Zip 750 uses the new USB 2.0 standard to speed up data transfers.

During testing, a USB 2.0-equipped PC read 685MB of data off the disk in about 4½ minutes, vs. 15½ minutes over a USB 1.1 connection.

Write speeds did not show quite the same improvement. The drive took about 14½ minutes to write 685 MB of data over USB 2.0, against about 24 minutes with the slower connection.

Some new personal computers include USB 2.0 ports, but most will need an upgrade card to take advantage of USB 2.0's speed.

A FireWire version, compatible with any new Macintosh machine from Apple Computer Inc. and some PCs, costs $200.

Iomega plans to release an internal version of the drive soon.

This new drive also reads older, lower-capacity Zip disks but cannot write to 100MB media.

This attractive little gadget's competition, however, is not other Zip hardware – its seemingly ever-present CD-RW drives.

How do they compare?

Zip 750 disks hold slightly more information than CDs, their contents are easier to edit and erase, and unlike CDs, they cannot be ruined by a simple scratch.

But recordable CDs, sold for as little as a few pennies per CD-R and $1 or so for a blank CD-RW, cost a lot less than Zip disks, which go for $9 in the 250MB size and $11 to $15 in the new 750MB format.

The bottom line is the Zip 750, which retails at about $180, is sleek, fast and portable. But the CD-RW may be a better bet.

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